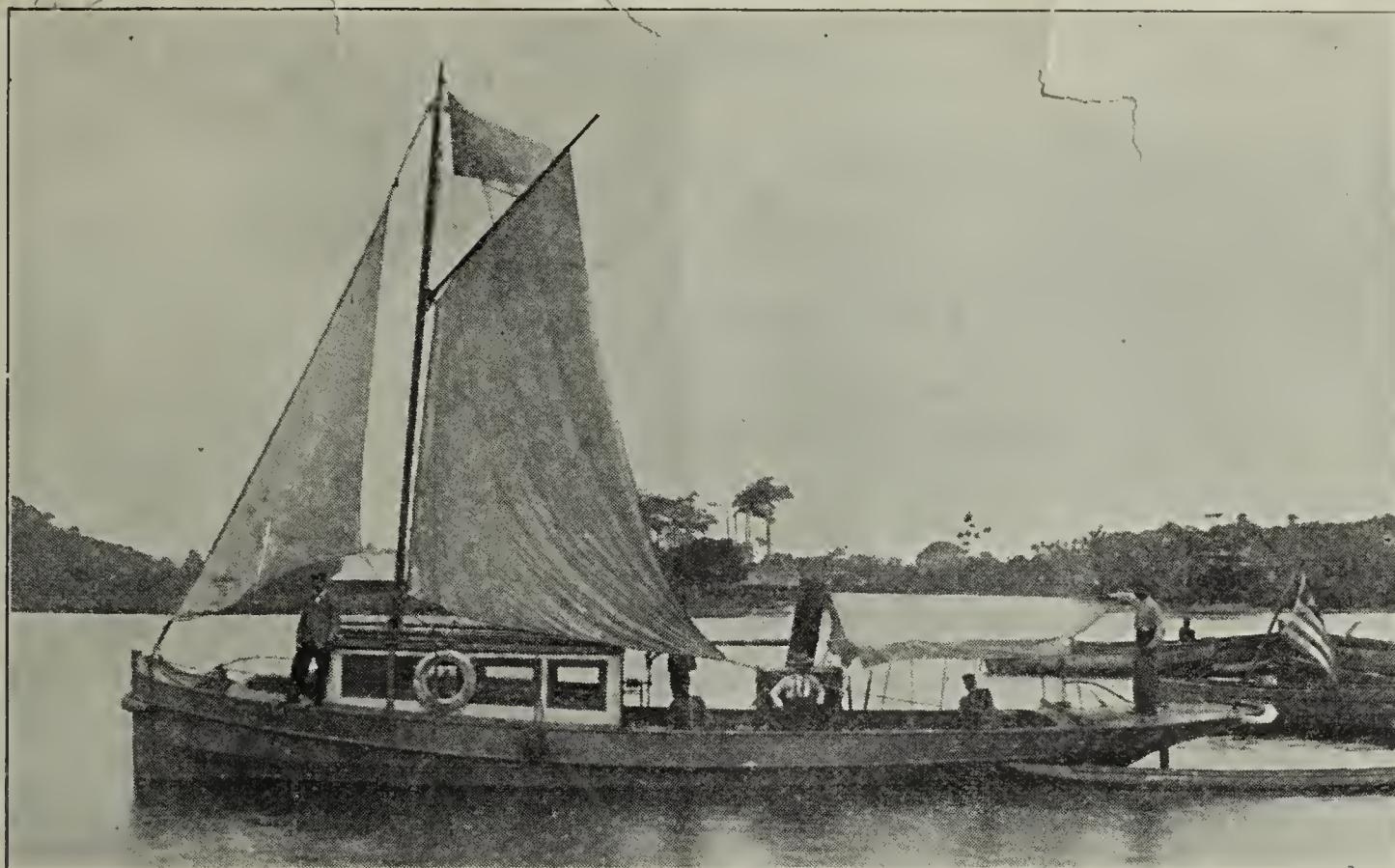


From  
Africa  
West  
Liberia

Starr, Frederick



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THE MISSIONARY LAUNCH "JOHN PAYNE"

## A SOJOURNER IN LIBERIA

Professor Frederick Starr, who holds the chair of Anthropology in the University of Chicago, recently spent a considerable time in Africa. A month of his stay was devoted to Liberia. As a well-informed and careful student of social conditions Professor Starr's conclusions are of unusual value. He has kindly written for us this article giving his impression of our mission work and workers.

ANXIOUS to see all possible of Liberia, we gladly accepted Bishop Ferguson's invitation to visit Bromley and to inspect the work done at the Julia C. Emery Hall. On reaching the landing at Monrovia at 8 a. m. we found the mission steamer, the *John Payne*, ready. Our party consisted of ex-President Barclay, ex-Postmaster-General Blount, Justice T. McCants Stewart of the Supreme Court, Major Young, U. S. A., military attaché of the American Legation, Mayor Johnson, the Rev. Mr. Cassell and Bishop Ferguson—all residents of Liberia—my photographer and myself. He and I were the only white men. Of the colored men some were born in Liberia, others in the United States—North and South—one at least in the British West Indies. Ex-President Arthur Barclay is by many considered to be the ablest man of Liberia; he has had a wide experience

and has gained exceptional knowledge of Liberian needs and problems. Mayor Johnson is one of the sons of the late President Johnson, who was the first "son of the soil" to occupy the presidential chair of the negro republic. Bishop Ferguson, born in South Carolina, has lived so many years in Cape Palmas and Monrovia that no one ever thinks of him as aught but a Liberian. He is a man of energy and ideas and his work speaks for his efficiency.

We were soon off, and for three hours steamed up the river, a typical, tropical African stream. A dense tangle of mangroves extends far out from the shore on both sides, over the water, completely concealing the actual land; the trunks rise from pyramids of exposed roots; from the branches, slender shoots, round-tipped, strike vertically down, penetrate the water, force their way into the soft, oozy mud of the

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river bottom, take root and aid in spreading the tangled growth still further out over the water. Here and there straight gashes are cut into this mass of crowded trees to serve as landing-channels for native canoes. The first part of our journey was up a branch stream, the St. Paul's River branching near its mouth and entering the sea by more than the single outlet. As we approached the main river, the mangrove thicket thinned, and the most striking feature in the vegetation was the dragon-palm. It, too, rises from a pyramidal mass of exposed roots, but in form and foliage it is totally unlike the mangrove; its long narrow leaves lead to its being often called the sword-palm. Here we could often look back over the land, and saw oil-palms with their delicate, graceful crowns outlined against the blue sky—truly blue sky, for by October 15, the period of rains is practically over. We had passed settlements, here and there, upon the way; single houses of "Liberians," or little clusters of "native" huts; New Georgia, on our right, is quite a village but seems to bear an indifferent reputation—due perhaps to its history; it was settled with slaves rescued from slaving-vessels and such slaves were rarely considered as equals, in the old days, by the colonists.

When we reached the main river, the whole character of the scenery changed. The river itself was wider; the banks were cleaner and the flat land stood higher; the mangrove swamps disappeared; plantations showing considerable attention were to be seen here and there. While we had chatted and viewed the scene the Bishop had not been idle, and the smiling black boy now passed an abundant supply of sandwiches and sliced cake, daintily wrapped in paper and tied with narrow ribbons, all prepared beforehand by Mrs. Ferguson. Served with lemon and strawberry soda-water they were a welcome refreshment.

We had been so fully occupied that we had hardly noticed that three hours

had passed when we saw Bromley ahead. The building stands on a level terrace well above the river. It is said to be the largest in Liberia; whether so or not, it is a spacious, plain, well-built construction, admirably adapted to its purpose. Its architect and master builder, Mr. Scott, met us at the landing. He is a native of pure blood, a Grebo from Cape Palmas district. He has never been outside of Liberia and has had to gain his knowledge and experience as he best could. He has had correspondence instruction from an American school and finds it of advantage.

The building is known as the Julia C. Emery Hall and serves as a girls' school. The parlor is a fine room and upon its walls are displayed interesting cuts, portraits and documents, all relative to national, racial and mission history. We were shown through the building from tower—whence a splendid view over the river is to be had—to cellar. It is well equipped—dormitories, school rooms, chapel, dining room, kitchen, wash-rooms, storerooms—all suitable and neat and clean. Seventy girls are in attendance. There are not beds for all the children, perhaps not for more than half of them; half of the children sleep upon the floor on mats. This is no special hardship, as they are used to it; in my own opinion they are quite as well off without beds.

The girls form two groups—the large girls dressed in blue and white and the little girls dressed in pink and white. They seem neat and happy. They rendered a program for us which would have done credit to any teaching here at home:

Singing—"He Who Safely Keepeth,"  
School

Recitation—"The Burden,"  
Miss Jahlamae

Singing—"Sweet and Low,"  
Misses Nichols, Gibson, Tucker, Wisner

Dialogue—"Patience".....A class

Singing—"Wider Than the Ocean,"  
School



THE JULIA C. EMERY HALL, BROMLEY, LIBERIA

Recitation—"The Echo".....A class  
Recitation—"The Hurry Order,"

Miss Wood  
Singing, "Those Eternal Bowers,"

School  
Recitation—"Genesis, Chap. XLIX,"

A class  
Recitation—"The Chambered Nau-  
tilus" .....Miss Wright

Recitation—"Jephtha's Daughter,"

Miss Muhlenberg  
Singing—"The Whole Wide World,"

School

It is particularly interesting to see the harmony and friendship here. Some of the girls are Liberians, but there are also native girls from various parts of the country and from various tribes—Golas, Krus, Grebos. We went to the dining room, which had been cleared, and the girls went through with a calisthenic drill, which was beautifully rendered. Mrs. Moort is in charge of the school and deserves much credit for its satisfactory condition. After this drill was over we sat down to a table loaded with good things, and some of the larger girls aided in the serving. One of the aims of the school is to teach work and housekeeping. The school property includes two hundred acres of land, which will supply much of the food needed in

school and provide opportunity for instruction in gardening.

The Bishop stated that we must not tarry, as we were expected at Clay-Ashland. A half hour by steamer brought us to its landing, where the resident clergyman, Mr. Cooper, son-in-law of Bishop Ferguson, met us. We walked up through a straggling settlement to the little church, near which a sign in brilliant lettering announced "Welcome." Here we turned to the right and in a moment reached Alexander Crummell Hall, in construction. Here another brilliant lettering proclaimed "A Hearty Welcome to You." The building is to be of wood with corrugated iron roofing; it is not yet covered in, but promises to be a fine and suitable structure. Only the side verandah was usable; it was covered in and adorned with palms in honor of the occasion. The boys and young men were seated on two lines of benches facing, between which we walked up to the speaker's table. There were perhaps forty students present. They carried through a little program—reading, singing and addresses, all carried through with fine swing and vigor. The address of welcome was given in good English by a Bassa boy. In some interesting and appropriate remarks

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Major Young spoke to the boys of the life and lesson of Alexander Crummell, in whose honor the hall was named and whom he himself had known. It was now well on in the afternoon and time for us to start on our return journey. This was rapidly accomplished as the current was in our favor and we tied up at the landing in Monrovia at 6.30, with stars twinkling in the sky above us and town lights reflected in the water below.

Bishop Ferguson had invited me to see the Kru service on a Sunday afternoon. Two Kru men called to escort me to the little chapel, which is situated on a rocky slope overhanging Krutown. The native settlement is at the waterside, upon the low sandy beach; its population, houses and life are purely native. Down there they speak Kru; men and boys all know English; some women and girls do. It is a hardy, vigorous, energetic population. The men are water folk; they are splendid canoe men; they are the main dependence of the steamers, which they serve as crews and wharfingers. When we arrived at the little chapel we found it crowded; more than a hundred men, women and children were assembled. The women were a sight for tired eyes, with their brilliant wrappings, gay head bands and ring-loaded fingers. Few Liberians were present—Bishop and Mrs. Ferguson, Superintendent Bright and a few teachers. Pastor McKrae is native—but a Grebo, not a Kru. The two tribes are related and their languages are very similar. I was warmly welcomed and an interesting program of singing and recitation was carried out—all in Kru except the Bishop's introduction and my own remarks, which were interpreted from English into Kru as we spoke. These people are enthusiastic; they are interested in their chapel and contribute to its support; they are crowded in their present quarters and are about to raise a larger and finer building.

I had intended to see the work at Cape Palmas, but it was impossible for me to go there. For that at Bromley,



A NATIVE TYPE

*This woman was the first convert from heathenism in a new mission*

Clay-Ashland and Kru chapel I have only words of praise. My own opinion is that Liberia's greatest asset is the native. He exists in a score of independent tribes and counts a million souls. If the little black republic is to hold its own, if it is to remain a nation among nations, if it is to lead the way to African redemption, there must be a mutual realization by Liberians and Natives of their common interest, and a hearty co-operation. The burden is too heavy for the Liberian alone. In Bishop Ferguson's work there is the nearest approach to tolerance, union, brotherhood and mutual helpfulness seen during my expedition.

FREDERICK STARR.